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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the contributions of Jewish professional and lay people to the education of children with hearing impairments over the past 250 years throughout Europe. It begins with the contributions of Jacob Rodriguez Pereira in the 18th century in France, an oral teacher of the deaf and the inventor of a phoneme-transmitting manual alphabet. It also reviews the history of six former European schools for Jewish deaf children in Vienna, London, Lemberg, Berlin, Budapest, and Minsk. In addition, it mentions four smaller Jewish schools situated in Poland and two schools founded by German speaking Jews in the United States. Methods of teaching language at these schools, including oral, constructive, and natural approaches, are briefly discussed. (DB)

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The contribution of Jewish professional people to the education of hearing impaired children in Europe

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Abstract: Many Jewish professional and lay people have influenced the development of the education of hearing impaired children in Europe during the past 250 years. This paper sums up their contribution, beginning with the work of Jacob Rodriguez PEREIRA in France during the second half of the 18th century. It deals also with the history of the former six leading European schools for Jewish deaf children in Vienna, London, Lemberg, Berlin, Budapest and Minsk. It addition, it mentions also four smaller Jewish schools situated in Poland. In the past, some of the six leading Jewish schools numbered among the best oral schools for deaf children in Europe.

The 18th International Congress on Education of the Deaf (ICED) takes place at Tel Aviv in Israel. This fact induced me to write a small book with the following title:

"Der Beitrag judischer Fachleute und Laien zur Erziehung und Bildung hörgeschadigter Kinder in Europa und in Nordamerika - Ein historischer Uberblick vom 18. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert"

As the title of this booklet, published in Germany in June 1995, indicates, it deals with Jewish professionals and lay people and their contribution to the education of hearing impaired children in Europe and in North America. It would be tempting to introduce you into the history of all the Jewish schools and their leading teachers mentioned in this booklet. The limited time prevents me from giving way to this temptation. Therefore, I can only come up here with a few European names, facts, and figures. Additional information can be found in the mentioned booklet.

Jacob Rodriguez PEREIRA (1715-1780)

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was the first great Jewish oral teacher of deaf children in Europe. He is also known as the inventor of the first phoneme-transmitting manual alphabet. By

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the way, the first ICED, which took place in Paris in 1878, was organized by the French PEREIRA - Society.

The Jewish school for deaf children in Vienna (1844-1928)

was the first school of its kind in the world. Therefore, it became a model institute which coped successfully with this demanding task. It was founded at the suggestion of Dr. Franz Herrmann CZECH (1788-1847), a Catholic priest and teacher of deaf children. This priest nominated Joel DEUTSCH (1813-1899) as the first teacher of this school. Under the direction of DEUTSCH (1844-1888) and of his successor Dr. Moritz BRUNNER (1888-1908) the Jewish school for deaf children in Vienna developed not only into one of the leading oral schools for deaf children in Europe, but it was also one of the first schools for deaf children which started - thanks to its close cooperation with Prof. Dr. Viktor URBANTSCHITSCH (1847-1921) - an intensive auditory education program.

The Jewish school for deaf children in Vienna became the mother institute for similar schools within the former Austria-Hungary and in North America. Its outstanding oral education inspired also all the other special schools for deaf children within the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire to stop the hitherto combined method and to replace it by the oral method. Unfortunately, the disintegration of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire after World War I resulted in a drastic reduction of the number of its pupils. Therefore, the Jewish school for deaf children in Vienna had to be closed for financial reasons in 1928.

The Jewish school for deaf children in London (1863-1965)

had existed longer than any of the other five leading Jewish schools for deaf children in Europe. As the already mentioned Jewish school in Vienna it was highly influenced by the socalled German oral method of teaching deaf children. Its first principal was William VAN PRAAGH (1845-1907) who had been trained at Rotterdam by David HIRSCH (1813-1895). HIRSCH was a German Jew and had received his training by Karl August HEINICKE at his private school for deaf children at Krefeld in Germany. By the way, Karl August HEINICKE (1768-1838) was a son of the famous Samuel HEINICKE (1727-1790), the principal of the first German school for deaf children, opened at Leipzig in 1778.

When William VAN PRAAGH was entrusted with the direction of an oral model school and a training college for oral teachers of deaf children in London, he had to resign from his position as principal of the Jewish school and was replaced by Simon SCHÖNTHEIL from the Jewish school for deaf children in Vienna. Therefore,

is is small wonder that the Jewish school in London was - from its very beginning - one of the best oral schools for deaf children in the United Kingdom. Its teaching was always guided by the following principles laid down by SCHÖNTHEIL:

"Rarely write, never gesticulate, always speak. Do not cut up your words and sentences. And let emphasis clearly mark the chief sounds, radical syllables, and the most important words. Lipreading will then be easy, the voice will sound naturally, speech will come forth spontaneously, and the double affliction of being deaf and dumb will undoubtedly be overcome!"

A few years before VAN PRAAGH went to England, another Dutch teacher, also trained by HIRSCH at Rotterdam, had started to teach deaf children in England. In 1858 he was invited by a Jewish couple at Manchester to educate their deaf son. The name of this teacher was Gerritt VAN ASCH (1836-1908). A few years later, VAN ASCH opened a private school for deaf children in London. Later he emigrated to New Zealand and founded the first school for deaf children in this then British colony at Christchurch. When Alexander Graham BELL (1847-1922) visited this school in 1911, he said that it was the best oral school which he had ever seen outside the USA.

Other famous trainees of David HIRSCH at Rotterdam besides VAN PRAAGH and VAN ASCH were Mr. VAN DER WIELEN, who started the oral education of deaf children in Belgium, and Abbé Seraphin BALESTRA (1831-1886), principal of the school for deaf children at Como in Italy and founder of an oral school for deaf children in Buenos Aires in the Argentina (1885). In other words: generations of deaf children in the Netherlands, in the United Kingdom, in Belgium, in Italy, in New Zealand, and in the Argentina are indebted to David HIRSCH, to a Jewish teacher from Germany, for their oral education.

One hundred years after its opening the Jewish school for deaf children in London had to be closed in 1965. Owing to the new opportunities of early auditory education more and more hearing impaired children could be educated together with hearing children in regular schools. And because this is true of Jewish as well as of non-Jewish hearing impaired children, there was no longer a need for a special residential school for hearing impaired children of Jewish faith.

<u>The Jewish school for deaf children at Lemberg</u>
(1871-1919 <?> or 1939 <?>)

was opened as a small private school by Mr BARDACH in 1871. Mr BARDACH had taught at the Jewish school for deaf children in Vienna and was trained by Joel DEUTSCH. Therefore, there is no doubt that he offered a

good oral education, too.

Lemberg had a population of about 360.000 inhabitants in 1936. One third of them were Jews. Lemberg was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire from 1772 till 1919 and belonged to Poland from 1919 till 1939. Unfortunately, no information could be found about the year in which the there Jewish school for deaf children was closed. Was it already closed in 1919 or did it continue to exist till 1939 when this part of Poland was occupied by the Soviet Union?

The Jewish school for deaf children in Berlin (1873-1942)

started its work at Fürstenwalde near Berlin in 1873 and was moved to Berlin in 1890. Its first principal was Markus REICH (1844-1911). After he had passed away his wife Emma REICH was his successor till 1919. The third and last principal (from 1919 till 1939) was their son Dr. Felix REICH (1875-1964). In other words: The Jewish school for deaf children in Berlin was a kind of a family enterprise.

Dr. Felix REICH was one of the leading German teachers of deaf children in the years after World War I. Due to his initiative the first classes for secondary education of deaf adolescents were founded in Germany.

By the way, a sister of Dr. Felix REICH was married with Richard HÖXTER, a teacher of the Jewish school for deaf children in Berlin. Richard HÖXTER was sent to Palestine in 1932 to build up the school for Jewish deaf children in Jerusalem.

Owing to the anti-Jewish policy of the German national socialist party of Adolf HITLER and its government in the years from 1933 till 1945 the number of teachers and pupils of the Jewish school in Berlin decreased from year to year. In order to save the endangered lives of at least some of his pupils, Dr. Reich took 9 or 10 of them to England in July 1939. Although he was a Jew and could already look back to a longer stay in a German concentration camp, he was again imprisoned in England as a German when World War II began. The children whom he had taken to England were well received by the Jewish school for deaf children in London.

The Jewish school for deaf children in Berlin stopped to exist in 1942 when all its inhabitants were moved away to a place of no return.

The Jewish school for deaf children in Budapest (1876-1945)

was opened 1876 and Leopold GRÜNBERGER (1840-1910) was its first principal. He regarded himself as a student

of Friedrich Moritz HILL (1805-1874), the great German teacher of deaf children in the 19th century and the most important representative of the natural approach in teaching spoken language to deaf children. GRÜNBERGER had worked for some years at the Jewish school for deaf children in Vienna under DEUTSCH before he returned to Hungary. He was as successful in the oral education of deaf children as HILL and DEUTSCH. His pupils learnt not only their Hungarian mother-tongue but also German and some Hebrew.

The fate of many Jewish children in Hungary during World War II was similar to that of Jewish children in Germany. Their lives were extinguished by gasification. About 50 of them were, however, saved by an extremely brave and gallant child otologist and teacher of the deaf, by the famous Hungarian Gusztáv BÁRCZI (1890-1964).

The Jewish school for deaf children at Minsk (1888-1917)

was opened by Mrs NISSNEWITSCH in the capital of White Russia in 1888. It is not known when it was closed. There is, however, no doubt that this private school will not have survived the socalled October revolution of 1917.

The Jewish school for deaf children at Minsk was, as all the other already mentioned schools, an oral school. The pupils learnt to speak Russian and Hebrew.

Jewish schools for hearing impaired children within the boundaries of Poland

In addition, there were three more smaller Jewish schools for hearing impaired children in the once Russian occupied areas of Poland (1795-1919), namely at Warsaw, at Lódz and at Bojanowo (between Póznan and Wroclaw) and one small Jewish school for hearing impaired children at Miedzyrzezc (in West Poland).

Summary

Which methods of teaching spoken and written language were used in the mentioned schools? It is well known that language teaching in almost all schools for deaf children all over the world was done with the socalled constructive methods in the past. These methods were highly structured and grammar oriented approaches. Newer and more modern methods which are guided along the linguistic development of hearing children and which, therefore, are also called natural or maternal methods have gained a wider acceptance only in the second half of our century.

As far as the six leading Jewish schools for deaf children in Europe are concerned, this statement is

only partially true. The method of teaching language to deaf children was in five of them more natural than constructive. This was, by the way, already true of PEREIRA's approach in France and of the teaching of DEUTSCH in Vienna. Remember that the other Jewish schools, leaving out the school in Berlin, were very much influenced by the work of DEUTSCH.

And this is another special feature of almost all of the mentioned Jewish schools: already since the days of PEREIRA the residual hearing of the children was never neglected or even ignored. I remind you - as pars pro toto - of the close cooperation of the Jewish school in Vienna with Prof. URBANTSCHITSCH. And leaving out the Jewish school in London, the deaf pupils of all the other schools had to learn not only their mother-tongue but also a second spoken language. Last but not least, their teachers did not use special text books written in socalled simple language, they used the same ordinary books which were in use in schools for hearing children.

The limited time does not allow me to go into further details and to deal with the work of the two great oral schools which were founded by German speaking Jews in the United States, namely the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York and the Central Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis. Fortunately, I can refer you to the above mentioned publication which offers all the missed additional details. It can be ordered (price: 10.- US $) from

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